

# MESOPOTAMIAN MINUTE

*- Current News on Agriculture & USDA in Iraq -*  
**Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Baghdad**

Sunday, August 29, 2010

**Large Sale of U.S. Rice** - On August 25 the Iraqi Grain Board awarded a tender to Archer Daniels Midland to supply 120,000 tons of U.S. long grain rice. The sale is valued at between \$65 and \$75 million. AMD participated in the USDA-organized Agricultural Trade Mission to Baghdad in June and was part of a team of U.S. companies that met with the Grain Board. 2010 U.S. rice exports to Iraq are expected to be much larger than last year owing to competitive pricing and a good crop in the United States. The rice will be distributed for free by the Iraqi government through its Public Distribution System feeding program. Iraq imports 90% of the rice it consumes.

**Sheep Program Supports Widows** – On August 23, USDA veterinarian Jessica McCoy teamed with the Baghdad Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) to provide sheep management training for 16 widows. The focus was on sheep pregnancy management, how to deal with problem births, and increasing lamb survival. As part of the PRT's program, the widows had earlier been given bred/pregnant ewes. All the trainers and interpreters were women which allowed for candid and open discussions. The training was filmed by a White House videographer and will be included in the weekly West Wing Week: "Dispatches from Iraq" broadcast. The link to the preview is:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNYZ8oYUtVo>

**USDA Support for Soil Research Station** – On August 25, USDA and U.S. Forces Iraq officials traveled to the Al Sewara Research Station in Wasit Province. The visit was organized by the Wasit PRT. USDA is working with the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture to renovate the research station so it is once again operative and able to assist the agriculture sector in Iraq through applied research. Among the resources needed are a large water pump and two kilometer pipeline from a large irrigation canal to the station. In addition 30,000 meters of plastic drainage pipe will need to be installed to ensure that the groundwater is drained away from the experimental field plots. The entire Al Sewara Research Station is approximately 400 acres in size and at one time was the flagship research station in Iraq. (Photo: USDA & USFI team at Al Sewara)



**Senior Bureaucrats Shuffled** - Three Director Generals (DGs) have recently been reassigned within the Ministry of Agriculture. All three are associated with animal production, including the DG for animal resources, the DG for veterinary services and the DG for fisheries. Additionally, the DG for the Ministry of Trade's Grain Board was also reassigned. These changes are significant in that they can delay implementation of USDA programs or policy reform discussion while the new DGs get their bearings.

**Personnel Update**- There are currently 33 USDA personnel in Iraq including those with Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), at Embassy Baghdad or embedded with U.S. military units. Karbala PRT Agricultural Advisor David Nisbit departed after 18 months of exemplary service. Thad White has joined Baghdad PRT-West.

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